Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer

BUSINESS PLAN

2003 - 2006

Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer
909, 9942 -108 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2J5
Phone: (780) 422-9021
Fax: (780) 427-0423
E-mail: acat@gov.ab.ca
Web Address: http://www.acat.gov.ab.ca/

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Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT)

Business Plan, 2003-2006

MANDATE

Established in 1974, the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer serves as an independent body through which stakeholders work cooperatively for the benefit of learners to ensure smooth secondary to post-secondary transition and effective transferability of courses or programs within the post-secondary system.

ACAT provides leadership to Alberta's post-secondary transfer system to achieve:

- increased educational opportunities for adult learners through student transfer; and
- accurate information for learners about admission and transfer opportunities.

ACAT operates with the support of the Minister of Learning and the co-operation of Alberta's post-secondary institutions. Student transfer involves the portability of educational credit among programs. Based on successful completion of studies, students receive transfer credit, where appropriate, upon admission to an educational program in an Alberta post-secondary institution.

VISION

Alberta learners access post-secondary education through a nationally and internationally recognized admissions and transfer system.

MISSION

The mission of the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer is to be a catalyst for necessary change and an advocate for learners in the areas of admission and transfer to educational programs.

ACAT provides leadership and direction in the improvement and enlargement of educational opportunities for learners through inter-institutional transfer. This requires a commitment to improving communication among and between Alberta's post-secondary institutions, as well as stakeholders in the trades and secondary system, and to promoting the advantages of a system of education, with all that means for educational planning for the benefit of learners.

To carry out its mission, ACAT:

- identifies issues and explores resolutions to these issues with stakeholders,
- advocates for learners at both a general level through its Principles (Addendum A) and a specific level through interaction of ACAT's staff with learners,
- communicates with stakeholders and encourages communication among stakeholders on matters regarding admissions and transfer, and
- provides a forum for discussion of issues arising out of environmental change and trends related to post-secondary education.

PRINCIPLES

PRINCIPLES OF ALBERTA LEARNING

Learner-Centred	by focusing the business of the lifelong learning system on the learner
Accessible	by providing Albertans with access to quality learning opportunities
Collaborative	by working with partners and stakeholders to develop seamless lifelong learning
Accountable	by ensuring system and fiscal accountability
Responsive	by creating a flexible learning system that meets and anticipates learner need
Innovative	by implementing the latest global learning and technology solutions
Equitable	by providing equitable access to lifelong learning opportunities.

The Principles of Alberta Learning are incorporated into the Principles of the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (Addendum A).

LINKAGES TO GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA CORE BUSINESSES AND GOALS

ACAT's goals support the Alberta Government's goals with respect to People, Prosperity and Preservation as outlined in the Government of Alberta Business Plan 2003-06. As well, ACAT's goals link to Alberta Learning's core businesses and goals as described in Alberta Learning's 2003/2004 – 2005/2006 Business Plan.

CORE BUSINESSES

1. **Admission**: Encourages Alberta post-secondary institutions to adopt fair and equitable admission practices and policies.

2. **Transfer**: Facilitates agreements among post-secondary institutions to acknowledge and recognize appropriate previous learning experience.

3. **Communication**: Ensures that learners and other stakeholders have timely and accurate information about admissions requirements, course and program transfer opportunities and transfer policies, and provides a forum for discussion, encouraging inter-institutional discussion of admissions and transfer issues.

4. **Education and Advocacy**: Informs Alberta stakeholders about the benefits of our admissions and transfer system and advocates for its best practices. Assists and advises other jurisdictions about the procedures for and benefits of establishing and maintaining an efficient and effective admissions and transfer system.

STRATEGIES AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES FOR ACAT GOALS

ACAT has four goals arising out of these four core businesses:

1. Admission

GOAL: Learners will be admitted to programs on the basis of the relevance and quality of their total educational experiences.

Outcome: Improved student transitions from secondary to post-secondary studies.		
2003-2006 Strategies	**Actions**	**Expected Results**
Promote smooth transitions as students move from high school to post-secondary programs.	• Collaborate with Alberta Learning and stakeholders to improve secondary to post-secondary articulation. • Articulation committees involving secondary and post-secondary system stakeholders established as needed.	• Post-secondary admission issues are addressed as 30-level curriculum is revised. • Successful articulation of the new Social Studies and Science high school courses with prerequisite requirements at post-secondary institutions.
Performance Measure: ***Information regarding exit skills and competencies in high school social studies will be completed during 2003-2004.***		
Collaborate to produce secondary to post-secondary student transition information.	• Continue collaboration with Alberta Learning to study high school to post-secondary transitions.	• Report on transitions of the 2000-2001 Grade 12 cohort to identify trends.
Performance Measure: ***"Post-Secondary Transitions in Alberta: Educational Outcomes of 2000-2001 Students" is produced.***		
Encourage appropriate recognition of academic upgrading courses for admission to post-secondary programs.	• Continue to work with partners through the articulation process to ensure currency and integrity of admission charts. • Expand recognition of academic upgrading courses for admission, where appropriate.	• Publish charts showing acceptance of academic upgrading courses for admission to college or technical institute programs. • Publish charts showing acceptance of academic upgrading courses for admission to university or private university college programs.
Performance Measure: ***Academic upgrading courses are accepted for post-secondary programs in lieu of those offered in regular high school programs.***		
Advocate for appropriate recognition of academic upgrading courses to fulfill high school diploma requirements.	• Work with Alberta Learning and stakeholders.	• Adult learners have new opportunities to complete high school diploma.

Outcome: Application activity is monitored to identify trends.		
2003-2006 Strategies	**Actions**	**Expected Results**
Continue Duplicate Application Detection (DAD) project to identify trends.	• Continue to work with partners to refine and implement the Duplicate Application Detection project.	• Conduct Duplicate Application Detection study, Fall 2003 to identify trends in application activity.
Performance Measure: ***The DAD Report is published and electronic results are provided to participating institutions.***		

Outcome: Improve opportunities for students to apply for admission.		
2003-2006 Strategies	**Actions**	**Expected Results**
Advocate for the development of Internet applications for admission and access to course registration.	• Encourage use of Internet applications for admission to post-secondary programs.	• All institutions offer electronic applications for admission.

The 2003-2006 Business Plan recognizes the following opportunities and challenges relating to Goal 1.

- ***Student Admission to Post-Secondary Programs***

That students make successful transitions from high school to post-secondary programs is a desirable objective which poses a challenge to improve articulation between the secondary and post-secondary systems. As 30-level curriculum is revised, post-secondary institutions will need to review admission requirements in a timely manner. Building on its successful experience with articulation of post-secondary courses and programs, ACAT will develop strategies to improve secondary to post-secondary articulation. As part of this initiative, ACAT will work with stakeholders to develop strategies to improve communication about admission requirements to post-secondary programs. Through this enhanced role, ACAT can help promote smoother transitions as students move from the Basic to the Adult Learning systems. ACAT will provide leadership to ensure that future post-secondary admission issues are addressed. With clear information, high school students will be able to select appropriate courses to meet entrance requirements of post-secondary programs and thereby make a smooth transition to post-secondary study.

⇒ ***Social Studies (beginning 2003)***
ACAT will facilitate discussion with post-secondary stakeholders of implementation of the revised high school Social Studies curriculum and its use for admissibility to post-secondary programs. The ACAT Secretariat will collect post-secondary institution's decision's on the matter of admission and will facilitate dissemination of that information to secondary schools and students.

⇒ ***Science (beginning 2003)***
ACAT will facilitate discussion with post-secondary stakeholders of implementation of the revised high school science curriculum and its use for admissibility to post-secondary programs.

- ***e-learning***

As more and more learners take advantage of e-learning opportunities from around the globe, there will be increasing need to facilitate recognition of prior learning.

- ***Acceptance of Academic Upgrading Courses***

ACAT has built credibility for its Academic Upgrading charts so that adult learners are able to use these courses for admission to post-secondary programs. However, there are adult learners who would like to complete the requirements for Alberta Learning's high school diploma by taking several appropriate academic upgrading courses at post-secondary institutions. There is an opportunity for ACAT to work with Alberta Learning and stakeholders to create new opportunities for adult learners to earn an Alberta High School diploma.

2. Transfer

GOAL: Learners will receive appropriate educational credit when they transfer from one Alberta program to another.

Outcome: Facilitate an effective and efficient student transfer system.		
2003-2006 Strategies	**Actions**	**Expected Results**
Produce system-wide principles, policies and procedures to facilitate the student transfer system.	• Continue collaboration with institutional partners to maintain and refine policy framework. • Review CMEC principles on credit transfer.	• Produce effective principles, policies and procedures to facilitate efficient operation of the student transfer system.
Monitor effectiveness of transfer system.	• Collaborate with partners to implement Transfer Patterns Study.	• Conduct the Transfer Patterns Study, Fall 2003 to identify trends in student transfer.
Performance Measure: ***Annually publish the Transfer Patterns Study to provide information on trends in student transfer.***		
Ensure continuing accuracy of transfer agreements.	• Continue collaboration with institutional Contact Persons to review all transfer agreements before production of the next *Alberta Transfer Guide*.	• Publish an accurate 2003-2004 *Alberta Transfer Guide*. • Ongoing publication of transfer information through the Online Alberta Transfer Guide.
Performance Measure: ***Alberta Transfer Guide is published and the Online Alberta Transfer Guide is updated.***		
Improve program articulation.	• Maintain ongoing program articulation initiatives.	• As post-secondary programs are revised, student transfer issues are addressed.
Performance Measure: ***Transfer advising charts are accurate and published in a timely manner.***		
Enlarge transfer opportunities.	• Encourage institutional partners to negotiate course transfer agreements where appropriate. • Encourage partners to develop program or block agreements that ladder from one credential to another.	• Annual evidence of number of course transfer opportunities for students. • Annual evidence of number of career laddering opportunities.

Outcome: Facilitate an effective and efficient student transfer system. (continued)		
2003-2006 Strategies	**Actions**	**Expected Results**
	• Encourage efficiencies by asking institutions to review internal transfer approval processes. • Facilitate transfer agreements through ACAT's Private Providers Policy.	• Ongoing review results in a more efficient transfer system. • Private Provider Fact Sheets are available to post-secondary institutions on request.
Performance Measure: ***Annually provide evidence of the increased opportunities for student transfer by reporting on the number of course transfer agreements each year. Number of career laddering opportunities increases each year. Private Provider Fact Sheets are available to post-secondary institutions.***		

Outcome: Provide leadership for system-wide recognition of prior learning assessments.		
2003-2006 Strategies	**Actions**	**Expected Results**
Advocate for the development of effective institutional policies and procedures for assessment of prior learning as well as system-wide recognition of prior learning assessments.	• Continue to collaborate with partners. • Reinstate ACAT's PLAR Advisory Committee to assess the state of PLAR in Alberta.	• Publish compilation of PLAR policies at selected institutions when warranted.

The 2003-2006 Business Plan recognizes the following opportunities and challenges relating to Goal 2.

- ***Pathways to Careers***

A range of pathways including high school Career and Technologies Studies/Tech Prep programs, and the Registered Apprenticeship Program are helping high school students as they develop their career plans and related educational objectives. There are opportunities to build awareness among stakeholders and to make such programs more useful by ensuring that articulation agreements gain appropriate recognition across the student transfer system.

- ***Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition***

Learners applying to programs at post-secondary institutions should have access to flexible and effective means of assessing their learning obtained in the workplace, from non-traditional providers, or from formal Continuing Education non-credit programs, so that their application for admission can be reviewed without delay, and there is no unnecessary duplication of courses, nor inappropriate loss of credit. ACAT has adopted principles and standards for the recognition of prior learning and post-secondary institutions have developed policies. ACAT's PLAR Advisory Committee could be reinstated in order to play a role in setting out guidelines for the transfer to a second institution of credit for prior learning that has been granted at another institution.

- ***Applied Degrees***

Students entering applied degree programs at public colleges and technical institutes need to know how their previous post-secondary learning will transfer and meet program requirements.

- ***Block Transfer Opportunities***

As Albertans pursue career paths that require further learning, more block transfer agreements would provide expanded opportunities for career laddering from certificate to diploma to degree programs. At the same time, one needs to be cognizant of students who don't complete the block of courses to ensure they don't have to repeat learning as well.

- ***Program Articulation***

Current articulation initiatives will be maintained while emerging course or program articulation issues should be recognized and identified. Decisions to initiate articulation work will reflect input from stakeholders such as ACTISEC, CAUS, and senior academic officers, Contact Persons, and the ACAT Infoline.

3. Communication

GOAL: Learners will have access to current, accurate information on admissions and transfer policies as well as course and program transfer opportunities.

Outcome: Provide information to assist potential transfer students.		
2003-2006 Strategies	**Actions**	**Expected Results**
Provide information to support students transferring to Alberta institutions so they can make informed decisions as they plan their studies.	• Continue to work with institutional partners to produce an annual compilation of all transfer agreements.	• Annually publish the *Alberta Transfer Guide* so that learners have accurate information on courses and programs that transfer as well as admission policies.
	• Continuously update the database that is accessible through the Online Transfer Guide and improve the Online Help available on the website.	• Enhanced delivery of accurate information in the Online Alberta Transfer Guide.
	• Encourage stakeholders to link their site to the Online Alberta Transfer Guide.	
	• Promote the Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS).	• Learners can link to ALIS from Online Alberta Transfer Guide and read about ALIS on inside cover of *Alberta Transfer Guide*.
	• Promote the Electronic Application Service (EAS).	• Provide a link from ACAT's website to EAS. • Using the Internet, learners can apply for admission.

Outcome: Provide information to assist potential transfer students. (continued)		
2003-2006 Strategies	**Actions**	**Expected Results**
	• Continue to provide the Transfer Infoline service via the Online Alberta Transfer Guide and telephone.	• Learners with questions about admissions or transfer can obtain useful information. • Use Infoline inquiries to monitor effectiveness of transfer system.
	• Publish program advising charts for selected subject areas.	• Learners can access transfer information in Biological Sciences and Engineering.
Provide information to support Alberta students transferring to other jurisdictions.	• Publicize the Online Alberta Transfer Guide beyond the province.	• Alberta students transfer to other Canadian post-secondary institutions and receive appropriate credit.
Provide information to support admission of high school students from other provinces applying to Alberta post-secondary institutions.	• Continue to produce advising charts to support admission of high school students from other provinces applying to Alberta post-secondary institutions.	• High school students who move to Alberta obtain accurate information on admission to Alberta post-secondary programs.
Performance Measures: ***Annually report participation in the student transfer system as shown by the number of institutions that negotiated transfer agreements for publication in the Alberta Transfer Guide.*** ***Annually provide evidence of procedures to assure accuracy of transfer information in the Transfer Guide and the Online Alberta Transfer Guide.***		

4. Education and Advocacy

GOAL: As ACAT advocates for best practices on admissions and transfer in Alberta, stakeholders will be informed about its benefits. As other jurisdictions begin to establish their own admissions and transfer systems, the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer will serve as a model and will provide encouragement and advice on best practices.

Outcome: Provide education and advice to Alberta stakeholders to assist learners with post-secondary education and career planning.		
2003-2006 Strategies	**Actions**	**Expected Results**
Educate students and other stakeholders about the benefits of being informed about the Alberta admissions and transfer system.	• Collaborate with Alberta Learning Supervisors of Guidance and Counseling to raise the profile of ACAT with teaching and counseling staff.	• Guidance and Counseling Supervisors will be aware of, and will encourage counselors to learn about Alberta's transfer system.

Outcome: Provide education and advice to Alberta stakeholders to assist learners with post-secondary education and career planning. (continued)		
2003-2006 Strategies	**Actions**	**Expected Results**
	• The Chair will participate in and present at conferences, workshops and career fairs in order to raise general awareness of ACAT and the Alberta Transfer Guide.	• Learners and those who advise them will become more aware of Alberta's admissions and transfer system.
	• A simplified handbook on the transfer system will be produced and distributed to Grade 10 students and other potential post-secondary students, as well as being posted on the ACAT Web site.	• Students and their parents, as well as other learners, will have access to simple and clear explanations of the admissions and transfer system.
	• High School Principals will be encouraged to include on their Web sites prelimary information about ACAT and a link to ACAT's Web site.	• School administrators and students will have a greater awareness of the transfer system.
	• The Chair will meet with the executives of ACTISEC and CAUS on a regular basis.	• Post-secondary students will be more aware of the principles, policies and procedures of ACAT and the availability of admission and transfer information.
Performance Measure: ***Anecdotal evidence will show that Alberta learners, those who advise them, and other stakeholders will be more aware of the need for awareness of the transfer system as they do post-secondary and career planning.***		

Outcome: Provide advice and assistance to promote inter-provincial portability of courses and programs.		
2003-2006 Strategies	**Actions**	**Expected Results**
Advocate for inter-provincial portability of student learning.	• Participate in discussion and consultations related to national portability of courses.	• Learners will benefit from inter-provincial portability of courses and programs.
	• Share information on Alberta's best practices with respect to its admissions and transfer system.	• ACAT will be perceived as a national leader in the establishment of admissions and transfer systems.

The 2003-2006 Business Plan recognizes the following opportunities and challenges relating to Goal 4.

- ***Student Advising***

The formal negotiation of course transfer agreements as well as program transfer agreements has served Alberta's students well but there is a continuing challenge to improve transfer opportunities through better program advising information to prospective transfer students. Students considering transfer require access to accurate information about programs and courses they need to select for successful admission and transfer into the chosen program.

- ***Success of Transfer Students***

Success of students who transfer, including graduates of diploma programs, should continue to be monitored.

ADDENDUM A

COUNCIL PRINCIPLES

The Council endorses the following as basic to its purpose and activities:

(a) **Student access to higher education and the opportunity for student mobility among institutions of higher education in Alberta shall be optimized.**

Barriers to student mobility shall be minimized. The integrity of educational programs and certification must, however, be maintained. A student should not be required to repeat previous learning experiences in which competence has been demonstrated nor should more transfer credit be granted than previous learning experiences would warrant for successful completion of the program.

(b) **Negotiation of opportunities for student mobility shall be based on the recognition that while learning experiences may differ in a variety of ways, their substance may be virtually equivalent in terms of content and rigour.**

Insofar as possible, transfer arrangements should allow for maximum recognition of previous learning experiences. The concept of **virtual equivalence** is vital to such arrangements.

(c) **Effective academic advising and career counselling and optimum mobility require that the student have prior knowledge of at least the minimum transfer credit which can be awarded.**

The *Alberta Transfer Guide* indicates the minimum transfer credit which is available for prior post-secondary educational experience upon admission to a post-secondary institution. Additional transfer credit may be negotiable on an individual basis.

(d) **Although responsibility for higher education is shared among various constituents, individual institutions have the primary responsibility for instructional programs. This responsibility includes program design and delivery, determination of academic prerequisites and student admission criteria, and certification of the academic achievement of students.**

In respect of student access to institutions and programs, it is to be emphasized that factors in addition to academic prerequisites often are employed as admission criteria. That is, while possession of academic prerequisites makes an applicant eligible for admission, it does not **guarantee** admission to an institution or to a particular program.

(e) **Institutions have the responsibility and the prerogative to investigate the total educational preparation of applicants seeking admission.**

Such investigation is intended to determine admissibility and appropriate transfer credit, and to counsel applicants. The relevance and quality of the applicant's most recent educational experiences should be the basis for admissibility and for transfer decisions unless such consideration would unfairly disadvantage the applicant. Differences in earlier preparation should not adversely affect consideration of the applicant. (See Principle (b) regarding **virtual equivalence**.)

(f) **After students are granted admission to an institution under a transfer arrangement, they shall be granted the same rights and privileges as students who began their studies at the institution.**